

training to become full-fledged pilots, delivering bombers from factory to the troops in Europe during the 1940s. They flew every kind of mission except combat. Because they were not officially part of the military, there were no bands or benefits awaiting them at the completion of their service. In fact, 39 of them lost their lives, and families and friends paid for the return of their remains. Not until 1977 were these women finally recognized and granted veterans status.

Efforts to integrate more women, to incorporate those military groups who had served as auxiliaries, grew during the Korean war. Barbara Toomer is a Utah veteran of the Army Nurse Corps during the Korean conflict, when the total enrollment of women in the armed forces was at just 4 percent.

Their sacrifice does not always end with their military tours of duty, nor does their struggle for respect. When Veda Jones, a disabled Vietnam-era veteran, sought to work with her local service organization, the local commander pointed her in the direction of the auxiliary. Undaunted, Jones persisted. She recalls thinking, "I'm 60 percent disabled. I am a Vietnam-era veteran. I did my time—22 years on active duty. I belong with the main body." Ten years later, Jones was installed as the president of this 5,400 member organization. The veterans of Utah have looked to her leadership, and she has unfailingly been found at her post. She has been an inspiring champion on behalf of veterans, working tirelessly to assist with veterans' employment and health issues in Utah today.

When the country called many reservists to active duty during the gulf war, there were many Utahns, men and women, who answered the call. We hold the ideals of patriotism and service dear in Utah. With 6,000 members in the Army Reserve and 1,500 members in the Air National Guard, Utah has more units per capita than any other State. Brigham Young University in Provo, UT, has one of the few all-female Army ROTC units in the Southwest, a unit that has distinguished itself already as a force to be reckoned with.

As is the case throughout today's military, women hold key leadership positions and comprise vital elements of the units, proving not only that women have the skills to be full players in the defense of our Nation, but also that they have the same motivation for service as their male colleagues.

The women veterans of World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam have opened the doors of opportunity for those Utah women on active duty today—as near as Hill Air Force Base or as far away as Europe, Korea, or on board ship.

The memorial dedicated last Saturday tells the stories of individual women, and it tells the story of a nation. Remember the women of the Revolutionary War and Civil War who dis-

guised themselves as men in order to serve. Remember the women who worked as spies for the Army or nurses on the battlefield. Remember your grandmothers dodging fire as ambulance drivers in World War I, or your mothers staffing essential supply depots during World War II and Korea. Remember the women who worked in intelligence units in Vietnam or as helicopter pilots in the Persian Gulf. Today, military women are serving aboard ships and flying the space shuttle.

I will look forward to visiting this beautiful and fitting memorial; and, when I do, I will think of Mamie Ellington Thorne, Mabel Winnie Bettilyon, Mary Worrell, Barbara Toomer, and Veda Jones, among so very many others. I will think of those now serving and be grateful to them as well as to their male colleagues for keeping this country safe.

May the Women in Military Service to America Memorial stand to remind future generations of these noble women who, like their brothers, have given up certain comforts of civilian life, have volunteered to go to far flung places around the globe, and put themselves at risk to advance the cause of freedom.

FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now turn to House Joint Resolution 97, the continuing resolution, for debate only. Therefore, no amendments will be in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 97) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 1998, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the joint resolution.

Mr. STEVENS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. House Joint Resolution 97 is now pending?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, this resolution would extend the continuing concept of our appropriations to Friday, November 7, of this year. The terms and conditions are exactly the same as the bill that was passed by the Senate in September. The 1997 fiscal year funding levels and policy limits will prevail during the extended period of this continuing resolution.

We have made considerable progress on the appropriations bills for fiscal year 1998. The Defense, military construction, Treasury, energy and water, and legislative branch bills have all been enacted.

The Transportation and VA-HUD bills are pending before the President

and should be signed within the next few days.

The Agriculture conference report has passed the House and is pending here in the Senate.

We expect to file an Interior appropriations conference report later today.

And it is my opinion we will complete the conference on the foreign operations, Commerce and Labor, Health and Human Services bills this week.

Additionally, we should pass or obtain cloture on the District of Columbia bill this week.

I am here to say I am grateful for the cooperation of the two leaders, Senator LOTT and Senator DASCHLE, in aiding our Appropriations Committee in passing these bills with significant bipartisan majorities.

We continue to need the help of all Members to complete our work prior to November 7.

Mr. President, I do not hope to come back to this floor again during this session of Congress to seek another continuing resolution.

We have very difficult policy issues to be settled on foreign operations, the Labor bill, and the Commerce bill, but I do believe we can complete the budget aspect of those bills this week. The controversial riders that are attached to the bills will dictate whether we can complete all of our work on these appropriations bills within this extended period.

I urge Senators who are concerned about these bills to support this continuing resolution, to give the committee the time it needs to work out the remaining differences between the House and the Senate on the bills that I have just enumerated.

Mr. President, again, it is my hope that we will, in this session, pass the separate appropriations bills, let the President exercise his will with regard to each bill, and conduct our affairs in the Appropriations Committee with separate appropriations bills and not to have one all-encompassing global type of continuing resolution as we wind up this session.

It is possible, Mr. President, to do our job, as we should do it—13 separate bills. That is my plea to the Senate. Help us work out the 13 separate bills.

I thank the President and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Brian Symmes, a fellow, and Maggie Smith, an intern, be granted the privilege of the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I now be

allowed to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized to speak as in morning business.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

TEXAS LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE DISPOSAL COMPACT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise to discuss legislation that the Senate may soon consider. The number of this bill is S. 270; it is the Texas low-level radioactive waste disposal compact bill.

As my colleagues know, the Congress is supposed to consent to all interstate compacts, which are contractual arrangements between States. In this case, we are asked to give our consent to the shipment of low-level nuclear waste from Maine and Vermont, and potentially other States, to Texas for disposal. I am opposed to this legislation as it is currently written. I want to make clear today what my intentions are.

Mr. President, we will have further opportunity to debate this legislation in full, and I do not intend to engage the bill's supporters today. I certainly never intend for this to become an acrimonious or bitter debate. But I want to publicly explain my opposition to this legislation and also what I intend to do.

I do not believe that it is the intention of the bill's sponsors, my good friends from Maine and Vermont, to do anything to harm the citizens of Sierra Blanca, TX, through this compact. My friends from New England are attempting to meet the concerns of their constituents. They just want to get rid of this nuclear waste and they want to figure out how to dispose of it. They want to get it out of their own States. I also understand that no one wants to have a nuclear waste dump in their neighborhood.

Now, this compact legislation says little about where the waste should go in Texas, other than that the State of Texas has an obligation to find a site. The State legislature in Texas has decided that there indeed will be a site and it will be in a small town in Hudspeth County, TX. My friends from Maine and Vermont, with whom I agree on many issues, and whom I enjoy working with, have not said that their State's nuclear waste should go to Sierra Blanca. But the effect of this legislation is to create a low-level nuclear waste dump site in a dusty little town in Texas called Sierra Blanca near the border with Mexico, about 60 miles east of El Paso.

Mr. President, I believe that there are many concerns that have been raised about the siting of this dump and the enactment of this legislation, including environmental issues, seismic problems, economic viability, current legal actions, and our relations with Mexico.

But I want to talk about one issue and one issue only, and hold what may

be the first debate we have ever had on the floor of the U.S. Senate that deals with environmental justice, which is a shorthand way of talking about the disproportionate exposure of ethnic minorities and poor people to environmental pollutants. That is to say, all too often, when it comes to where we site these nuclear waste dump sites or where we put an incinerator, we tend to locate them in communities where there is a disproportionate number of people of color or poor people because they don't have the political clout.

Why do I raise the issue of environmental justice on a bill that professes to do no more than grant the Congress' consent to a compact between Maine, Vermont, and Texas for the disposal of nuclear waste? Because it is this bill which will enable Maine and Vermont to indeed ship nuclear waste to Texas—and I understand why they are trying to do it—but also because Texas has made it very clear where it intends to locate the dump site. That dump site, not surprisingly, is located in an area of west Texas that is populated disproportionately by poor Hispanics. This happens over and over and over again in our country. When we want to figure out where we are going to put the nuclear waste, we look to where the poor people live, to where communities of color without the economic clout live, and that is where we put it.

Is the proposed location of the dump in a poor community simply a coincidence, I ask my colleagues? Was it chance that the dry, sparsely populated county in Texas tentatively chosen for the dump site is 66 percent Hispanic with 39 percent of the people living below the poverty level? There certainly were other scientifically acceptable sites for the dump, so why did the Texas Legislature choose this spot, the sixth poorest county in Texas, with a high minority population, a low median household income and a sludge dump?

The answer to these questions is simple. We in this body understand the answer to this question all too well. It was politics. The community living near the site singled out by the Texas Legislature did not have the political clout to keep it out. While all the other candidate sites were able to deflect the dump, Sierra Blanca, in far western Texas, a poor community, a Hispanic community, did not pack the political punch of the communities near the other possible sites.

Another question that has arisen is, why am I, as a Senator from Minnesota, involving myself in the decision of the Texas Legislature to select a particular Texas site for a nuclear waste dump? For this reason, colleagues: It doesn't just happen in Texas, it happens all over this country. Poor and minority communities, unable to protect themselves in the political arena, find the old plumber's maxim is as true as ever: "Waste flows downhill," both figuratively and literally, and if you are at the bottom of

the socioeconomic slope, the pollution lands on you.

That is what this is all about. That is what this cry for environmental justice is all about. I predict that eventually environmental justice will become a huge issue in the Congress. To repeat, it is the old plumber's maxim that "waste flows downhill, both figuratively and literally, and if you are at the bottom of the socioeconomic slope, the pollution lands on you."

I am standing on the floor of the U.S. Senate today to say that enough is enough. Until more of us say enough and we face up to the environmental injustices that we may contribute to in the granting of our consent in legislation such as this, poor and minority communities will continue to suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation in our country. We are in desperate need in the United States of America of a meaningful dialog on environmental justice. I believe Americans understand the need for fairness, and I want Americans to understand that we have to address environmental justice whenever we think about how to deal with problems like waste disposal. All our actions have moral implications, and what we decide on legislation like this can ultimately harm our most vulnerable citizens.

I intend, Mr. President, to have a full debate on environmental justice. I want Members to explain why we should overlook the environmental justice implications of our actions in this instance. I want to talk about how this situation is symptomatic of many situations that we face in our country today. I want the U.S. Senate, as a body, to reflect on the consequences of pollution on poor and minority citizens all across the United States of America. I also intend to offer an amendment which adds one additional condition to Congress' consent to the compact. That condition is essentially that Congress grants its consent as long as the compact is not implemented in a way that it discriminates on the basis of race, color, national origin, or income level. Specifically, it will be designed to allow people who don't have the chance to fight fairly in the political process to make their case in the courts. I want to give poor and minority people, communities of color, a chance to fight this out in the courts.

That is the very point of environmental justice. When the political process fails, environmental justice means trying to level the playing field, sometimes forcing conflict into a more evenhanded forum in this country. In this particular case, that would be the courts. I am sure, Mr. President, that none of our colleagues would argue that it is acceptable to discriminate against people by locating a nuclear waste dump site in their community. That being the case, it is a simple matter to say that if the location of the compact dump discriminates against people on the basis of their race or economic status, Congress will not consent to this compact. That will be the